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ABSTRACT

Some of the public policy problems currently facing the United States, which have been created by a reawakening to the real multiethnic character of society, are explored and developed in great detail in this paper. The analysis is confined to domestic affairs, but the significant impact of foreign affairs on ethnic group identity and intergroup relations in America is stated. A listing of central issues dealt with include the following: (1) quota and affirmative action--the most dramatic and most far-reaching in its implications; (2) ethnic studies--with the current rising demand of white ethnic groups to be included in the curriculum revision, there is real confusion among educators as to how to respond to the new surges and militancy that have arisen; (3) bilingual education--Spanish speaking groups have long perceived bilingualism as a key to their survival, and Chinese demands are currently litigating in the Supreme Court; (4) government reorganization--overlooked in the past is that there is no plan for the reorganization of municipal power which does not affect ethnic group relations quite dramatically; (5) racism--it has the most devasting consequences on intergroup relations in America; and (6) group identity--it has extensive public policy ramifications and is seen as deserving serious attention. (Author/AM)

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Social Policy And Multi-Ethnicity In The 1970s

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I propose to explore some of the public policy problems we are currently facing in the United States created by a reawakening to the real multi-ethnic character of our society. By no means will my exploration be complete. Recent events and my own personal consciousness will serve to define my boundaries.

My analysis will be confined to domestic affairs, but I do want to state my strong agreement with Dr. Robin Williams' view of the significant impact of foreign affairs on ethnic group identity and intergroup relations in America. This phenomenon is perhaps more important than we have imagined in the past, and will surely continue to be so. It is particularly apparent to those of us who work in the Jewish community, where our agendas are constantly affected by questions related to Israel and Soviet Jewry, by our appeal to our government and to other governments to protect Jewish security around the world, and by our relationships with other ethnic groups in America whose foreign affairs agendas create either coalitional possibilities or conflicts.

There is considerable confusion in our nation, even among well-informed citizens, about the multi-ethnic nature of our society and what its contemporary significance is in terms of public policy. Let me first list a few of the pressing and emerging issues I think we must deal with more effectively than in the past. I will develop them in greater detail further on.

A LISTING OF CENTRAL ISSUES

1) The quota and affirmative action issue is the most dramatic we have to face, and certainly one of the most far-reaching in its implications. We began to see some of the ramifications in the 1972 presidential elections, where both candidates were hard pressed to declare their positions on quotas.

2) The ethnic studies issue is still quite controversial. With the current rising demand of white ethnic groups to be included in curriculum revision and enrichment, there is real confusion among educators as to how to respond to new surges of interest and militancy which, in the case of non-white minorities, were followed by a seeming decline in interest.

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3) Bilingual education will soon be before the Supreme Court in the form of the Lau case reflecting Chinese demands for improved bilingualism in the schools. Spanish-speaking groups have long perceived bilingualism as key to their survival, and they too are taking legal action in New York City.

4) Government reorganization is capturing attention everywhere. In many of our large cities and metropolitan areas we are facing serious struggles over decentralization, community control, and neighborhood government. What has generally been overlooked in the past is that there is no plan for the reorganization of municipal power which does not affect ethnic group relations quite dramatically. Reformers have too often sought to over-rationalize government organization without sufficient understanding of the nature of "people systems" -- the formal and informal networks which exist in all ethnic neighborhoods.

5) The overriding importance of the issue of racism is indisputable. It has been further exacerbated by the recent revival of the debate on race and I.Q. It is all too apparent that racism has the most devastating consequences on intergroup relations in America. Nevertheless, even in our own field of intergroup relations, among the professionals closest to the issue, there has been an inadequate understanding of the relationship of racism to the broader framework of differential ethnicity.

We must recognize that Black-white polarization as an analysis of intergroup relations problems in America is neither sufficiently descriptive, nor as helpful as we might have previously believed in fighting racism.

6) While the concept of identity may seem to be too broad for a brief catalogue of current issues, "group identity" (the ingredients of which remain ill-defined and rather mysterious) has extensive public policy ramifications and deserves serious intellectual attention. What affects us on the deepest emotional level eventually emerges in the political arena. Witness the growth of the wearing of "ethnic power" buttons and the display of nationality stickers on the backs of cars.

QUOTAS-AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Of all the social policy issues which are tied to ethnicity and group identity, the quota-affirmative action question has generated the most profound and heated debate. The issue is not just a matter of bringing more Blacks, Puerto Ricans, other minorities and women into positions previously denied them. It is a philosophical question concerning both individual rights and group interests in this society.

While I have a strong personal bias toward safeguarding individual rights in law, I have an equally deep desire to see

an instrument created which will guarantee justice to people who have in the past been deprived of it. That, quite obviously, is easier said than done. How does a society go about bringing emerging groups into deserved positions, while not hurting those who have legitimately utilized existing channels to attain their positions, and who are not as individuals responsible for the system's injustice to others? This is a dilemma of enormous proportions, but perhaps not one which totally defies solution.

Given the potential for violence along ethnic lines, due to the successive immigrant waves which made up our society, we arrived at our present status with, relatively speaking, surprisingly little ethnic group violence. With some sensitive reanalyses of our history in these terms, we may find much that is positive to build on. Since the earliest days of American history, there have been constant power realignments among ethnic and religious groups. However inadequate these adjustments may have been, they were made with relative sanity.

The present demand on the part of many groups for percentage or numerical proportions in certain job categories, educational and other institutions might be possible to carry out in special situations in the short run. But it is doubtful that a quota strategy carried out to its logical conclusions could succeed in a multi-ethnic society like ours. With so many competing group interests, it is inconceivable that any one group could, for any length of time, maintain a proportional share without encountering claims from other groups for their shares. Eventually in a nation as ethnically diverse as ours, those claims would be reduced to absurdity.

In addition to being unrealistic, the demand for "percentile justice" serves to further harden the already substantial opposition -- an opposition quite firm on quotas, but more diffuse and more negotiable on affirmative action. As this opposition grows, it could eventually paralyze the forward thrust of blacks, other minorities and women. It has already led to a slowing down of legitimate affirmative action programs in many areas of progress for minority groups.

"Alternative Action"

To head off a potentially disastrous backlash on affirmative action, one that will make the school busing controversy seem like child's play, we might focus instead on a concept parallel to affirmative action that I call "alternative action." It is a concept which recognizes that in addition to insuring upward mobility for new groups, programs are also needed to benefit those who have been adversely affected by "ethnic succession" -- those members of previously dominant ethnic groups who are now being replaced by emerging groups in various training institutions and occupations.

It might first be useful to take a look at the way in which "ethnic succession" functioned in the past. We might ask, for example, what happened to the Boston Brahmins when the Boston Irish replaced them in City Hall? Did the Brahmins rise or fall on the economic, social and power ladders? The answer, which may shed some light on our current dilemma, is that they rose. They entered new arenas of the social and power structures.

On the other hand, historical models may not be adequate in an age where forecasts of ecological doom and the dislocations of scarcity threaten us. The question we have to ask ourselves in the 1970s is whether or not there are sufficient opportunities for "alternative action." Are there positions to which members of established groups can now move once their presence in currently held positions becomes burdensome or unfair?

It may be unrealistic to cling simplistically to the "bigger pie" strategy in a society faced with the prospect of limited economic growth. Those who look to a better society only in terms of a rise in the Gross National Product have become prophets of doom. While there may, however, be cause for pessimism in terms of quantity, we may find cause for optimism if we focus on improving the quality of life. The solution may well lie in gearing occupations to human service needs and sharing resources more equitably. In a sense, we are left with little choice. It is essential to open new opportunities to minorities and women. Yet, it is equally essential to protect individuals who choose to retain the positions they achieved or to create for them new opportunities of equal status to compensate for social dislocation.

There are experiments in the intelligent stretching of resources to create new opportunities. For example, there is an acknowledged shortage of doctors in this country -- especially in rural towns and urban ghettos which are starving for medical care, and where people are literally dying for lack of it. Yet, only a small percentage of the well-qualified students who apply to medical school are admitted. Lately, there has been growing competition among members of different ethnic groups for admission. Jews, in particular, are beginning to fear the reinstatement of quota systems in medical education. Blacks, other minorities, and women are beginning to get into medical schools in larger numbers; but in absolute terms, these numbers are negligible compared to the need. In addition, there is a growing white working class push for medical education that has not yet been fully realized.

A recent innovation at Indiana University suggests the kind of imaginative coalitional programmatic solutions which can be applied elsewhere. Based on a need for training more doctors, the University decided to expand its medical school entering classes by 15% each year, without new spending for capital construction. Their new approach involved cooperation with other major universities for early course work, assigning students to local hospitals for early clinical experience, closed circuit

television instruction, and special seminars back at the medical school. Accrediting officials have given the program high marks.

When the University took its request for funding to the Indiana legislature, it easily won a needed appropriation for the program because increasing demands for doctors were coming simultaneously from Indiana's small towns and from urban ghettos. The diverse elements of a coalition were pulled together, and the financial resources for the expanded pie were made available.

That was a winning strategy in more ways than one: it worked to win the needed resources and, perhaps even more importantly, to overcome polarization. This is the kind of campaign which we must begin to organize all across the country, around the short supply of personnel in areas recognized by the majority to be vital to our well-being. In this way, we can move toward achieving true affirmative action without exacerbating ethnic tensions which all too often degenerate into stalemated conflicts where there are no winners.

New Research and Strategies

Of course, critics will say, it's relatively easy to expand training opportunities and jobs in sectors of acknowledged shortage. (Although, I might point out how little of this kind of progress has been made even in areas where it would be relatively easy.) Isn't the real problem in the areas of the economy where there is an excess of available personnel, such as the field of education?

Obviously, that is the tougher nut to crack, but we have clearly not exhausted all the possibilities. Before we can propose realistic long-term solutions however, there is a critical need for social research to provide us with answers to questions like the following:

a) How has ethnic succession operated in the past? Are there social cycles we can learn from and apply to today's problems?

b) What happens to groups involved in conflict over ethnic succession? Does the group with influence and power necessarily get pushed out and down by emerging forces, or does it perhaps progress to new areas which it had been unaware of as realistic options?

c) What happens to individuals from "displaced" groups who lack the ability to move into new areas? Has "society" taken responsibility for helping those individuals? Is there an analogy between such "social displacement" and technological displacement, where workers have been retrained when their jobs become obsolete?

d) What mechanisms have been created or might be created to assure access to training, employment and economic justice for individuals who are part of formerly excluded groups, which at the same time would assure the maintenance of appropriate institutional standards?

While such research is underway, there are some possible solutions that need wider discussion and experimentation. For example:

a) Job categories where there are surpluses can be better regulated. Through effective occupational counselling, occupational choice can more rapidly reflect the realities of the job market.

b) Occupational retraining to encourage people to move from areas of surplus to areas of shortage can be strongly encouraged through subsidies.

c) Experimentation with shorter work weeks, flexible work schedules, shared jobs, and other innovations which allow for an expansion of the work force have proven to be quite successful. An increasing number of men -- particularly the young worker and the soon-to-be-retired -- are seeking greater flexibility in the use of their time, as are many women eager to build home-career combinations.

d) Longer vacations, more frequent and longer sabbaticals, subsidized mid-career education, and early retirement would all serve to increase the number of jobs.

How are these ideas to be implemented? How do we finance these kinds of social innovations? A variety of groups and organizations will have to come together to create the politics. Large sectors of the middle class might successfully be rallied to such a coalition, since the problems of job dislocation and scarcity are no longer confined to poor and low-income Americans. Ideally, the costs would be borne out of a new national commitment to humanization and to equity. But based on sound economics alone, our society might find a way to foot the bill. There is already vast evidence that productivity in highly industrialized societies like ours has been sharply curtailed by problems such as those related to poverty, by lack of educational achievement, by unrealistic expectations, by boredom and a lack of fulfillment on the job, by wasteful competition, and by interethnic group conflict on jobs.

Still, the prophets of doom may be wrong again. We have reached a point at which the scarcity of resources and the scarcity of decent jobs in our society may become severe enough to finally move recalcitrant institutions and leaders to find ways to end the phenomenal waste of materials and the waste of human capacity.

ETHNIC STUDIES

The ethnic studies issue is a confusing one. Over the past few years, we have all seen some newspaper analyses and some academic evaluation of hastily put together Black studies, and then Hispanic, Asian and American Indian programs. Jewish and other white ethnic studies programs have expanded more recently. So far, there have been few loud hurrahs, a number of broadsides, and a marked decrease in interest -- probably the fate of most new and controversial projects.

However, the fact that the sudden infusion of ethnic studies into academia was more politically than academically inspired does not necessarily lessen their impact. Paradoxically, it may strengthen the long-range impact, even though some of the students who were its strongest advocates may lose academic interest. Those students were telling schools and universities they wanted to learn about themselves, their parents and their grandparents, and their people. They paved the way for that knowledge to become institutionalized. In the not too distant future, their younger sisters and brothers, and certainly their own children, will automatically be able to learn about their own groups and others as well. They will have new curriculum -- a far cry from the "melting pot history" we learned, and teachers sensitized to cultural differences.

With the passage by Congress of the Ethnic Heritage Studies Programs Act in 1972, an important and historic stride has been made creating a framework for multi-ethnic and ethnic identity studies in all our schools. We now have national legislation which, for the first time, clearly and positively affirms the fact that this is a culturally pluralistic nation. It calls for the creation of new curricula oriented towards multi-ethnicity, individual and group identity, and intergroup relations.

Like much innovative legislation, the promise of appropriations is still a promise. Nevertheless, this is a highly important national policy, and with vigorous support from a variety of ethnic groups and educators who have become committed to it, federal funds for program development will eventually be made available. (Note: An appropriation of $2.5 million was made for spending through June 1975.) In the meantime, a number of individual states have passed their own legislation, and a wide range of curriculum innovations have been made at the local level in many cities and towns throughout the country.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The fate of bilingual education, an even more controversial concept, is still far from certain. A provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides very limited funding. At present, only a very small percentage of students who need such

instruction are receiving it. In a few states and localities, however, there have been strong movements for local support which have succeded. One excellent model is the Massachusetts legislation, which calls for a combination of bilingual and bicultural programming in the schools.

Bilingualism is a crucial issue, one which professionals in our fields should be deeply concerned with. There are and will continue to be strong opponents with philosophical arguments about destroying national unity, which they feel the use of one language provides. There will be struggles around established testing and certification procedures, and with teachers unions, around bringing new bilingual instructors into the system. There will have to be compromises. But we badly need transitional bilingual education. Millions of children will suffer for the rest of their lives from a lack of it. And we now have documented proof that it works -- not without problems, but it works.

DECENTRALIZATION

To take an intelligent stand on decentralization, community control, neighborhood government, and related issues is a difficult proposition. As is true in so many areas of social policy, one's philosophy and values are often unavoidably influenced by the ethnic group or interest group one happens to be a part of.

Jews in New York, for example, will have to decide whether their self-interests will be better protected by neighborhood power, as opposed to more universal city-wide power they now have as a group and the strength they have in certain professions. For Blacks and other groups, there are different but just as delicate questions to be weighed, such as the advantages of municipal versus metropolitan or regional forms of government.

Any objective observer would agree, however, that at present, in most metropolitan areas, services are not being adequately delivered to many neighborhoods. That failure is driving much of the middle class out of the cities and making the lives of the poor and the lower middle class even more miserable.

As we struggle for solutions in the midst of great uncertainty, one thing becomes increasingly clear: we do know that there is usually a better chance of getting decent service if you know the person delivering the service. And generally, we care more about how things work in our own home or apartment than how they work in the precinct or district, and many care more about their own neighborhood than the more abstract concept of "the city as a whole." The complexities and vastness of contemporary urban life have finally overwhelmed us. What we now need are small scale answers to large scale problems.

While skeptics still abound, there is a growing corps of adherents (on both the left and right) to the notion that if people are given power, along with the necessary tools and training, they will generally solve their neighborhood problems far better than any outside "expert." At the same time, there are obviously many functions which must be centralized. Governmental reforms, in my view, must provide for both realities. We need administrative flexibility that promotes a flowering for family and neighborhood enterprise and involvement in service delivery on the local level, and still assures responsiveness to neighborhood needs in the area of centralized functions and services.

RACISM

To go against the dictates of fashion is always difficult. To flaunt one's credentials as an advocate of progress for Blacks (if one is white) is to invite sneers in 1973. To do that and at the same time criticize the principal strategy adhered to by many Blacks and most of their white supporters is probably foolish. Yet, my personal identity is so intimately tied to my twenty-year involvement in civil rights activity that I'll risk all of the above for my own sanity, if not for the edification of others.

I have spent most of my career in the field of civil rights -- as an official of a human rights commission, a lobbyist for civil rights legislation, an intergroup relations professional for a private agency. In 1968, however, I began to hear a different drummer than most of my colleagues -- both Black and white. I felt strongly that harping on white racism as a "strategy" for creating Black progress was a serious mistake. I began to make public statements to that effect, and to be the subject of some rather strong criticism.

The loss of the Black movement's dynamism and the forging of a 1972 electoral majority antagonistic to Black interests are related to far more than just strategic mistakes, but one wonders if the losses had to be so bad. Progress has been slowed to the extent that Vernon Jordan, Director of the National Urban League, calls this period "the end of the second Reconstruction."

Only in the last few years have we begun to see more clearly that the attack on white racism as an end in itself was politically short-sighted. I am not now talking about truth and reality, or justice and morality, but politics. Once you get people to admit that white racism is endemic to our society, where do you go from there? Is attempting to induce guilt the best way to win new allies? (Jews also had romantic ideas at one time about the elimination of anti-Semitism, but by now have come to accept it as generally endemic to the societies they inhabit.)

Since the creation of the National Project on Ethnic America in 1968, we have been advocating a different strategy. It is oriented towards "bridge-building." Accept, we say, that racism is a fact of American life, that it is reflected in all our institutions, and works daily to the detriment of Blacks and other minorities. But also acknowledge the fact that you can chip away at it, slow as the process may be. But then we go on to say, even more emphatically, that attacking racism head-on may not be the most fruitful course to take. It proves to be far more productive to concentrate on those issues where Black and white ethnic communities can work together. Perhaps we can make an "end run" around racism, by providing both Black and white groups with a positive experience of being on the same side. Besides, it is only through alliances and coalitions -- even on an ad hoc basis -- that substantial power can be generated. The formal political structure is still a very significant reflection of the reality of economic and social power.

In addition to being politically unproductive, a simplistic attack on racism which makes whiteness or white-dominated institutions absolute evils fails to make the crucial distinctions between different white groups. It fails to see that white groups are at different levels in the hierarchy of our society; it voids the significance of different immigrant histories; it ignores the powerlessness of the average white ethnic; and most importantly, it solidifies white opposition to much of what is perceived as being in the "Black interest." It is a destructive approach, which lacks awareness of the value of coalition-building among groups who may have little love for each other, but great need for each other.

IDENTITY

Erik Erikson has done much to shed light on some of the mystery surrounding both personal and group identity. In his yearning for a better world and more universalistic identities, he hoped that the evolution of man would lead to the diminishing importance of ethnic group identity.

Nevertheless, he concluded from his life's work that identity is derived not only from "the core of the individual," but from the "core of the communal culture" as well.

Harold Isaacs of M.I.T., another brilliant thinker in this field, has expressed fears that the new emphasis on ethnicity as a major form of group identity will deteriorate into destructive ethnocentrism. While he clings, as does Erikson, to more universalistic ideals, as a social scientist he agrees with Kurt Lewin's description of ethnic identity as providing the "ground on which to stand."

Isaacs says, "An individual belongs to his basic group in the deepest and most literal sense that here he is not only not alone -- no small plus for most human beings -- but here as long as he chooses to remain in and of it, he cannot be denied or rejected. It is an identity he might sometimes want to abandon, but it is the identity that no one can take away from him."

While men and women have yearned for centuries for the kinds of humanistic social environments where people would be accepted as individuals and not on the basis of the ethnic group or class they were born into, there has always been an equally intense desire to create community based around one's people, family, clan, and physical proximity.

Whether group identity is "good" or "bad" defies resolution. It is, at any rate, "besides the point," since it is a fact of life. Anyone who might hope that Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, Jews, diverse white ethnics, feminists, homosexuals and others would simply dissolve into the common culture, fails to understand that it is all of these groups and their interactions which in fact comprise the common culture of America.

Yes, there is a great deal of fragmentation in America. Much of it, undeniably, is destructive. But contrary to conventional wisdom, I believe that much of the social fragmentation which now exists in America is largely a result of decades of ignoring group differences, as we clung to the "melting pot myth." When you ignore different economic and cultural life-styles, you ignore different needs.

The kinds of viable coalitions which give cement to a society like ours can only work when the needs of each participating group are fully recognized if not fully given in to. Such coalitions can then serve as new vehicles for working toward the kinds of universal ideals which Erikson, Isaacs, and I myself have never lost sight of.

GOVERNMENT AND ETHNIC POWER

When we talk about ethnic consciousness, the resurge in ethnic identity, and shifting alliances between ethnic groups and other interest groups, we are really talking about power -- about who has it and who doesn't, and for whose benefit it is being used.

In addition to assuring an equitable and rational reorganization of power on the metropolitan level, we now face profound changes in the distribution of power at State and Federal levels. The White House's revenue-sharing program, which has been packaged as an attempt to give more power back to the States, may well mean a swing in the balance of power from cities to suburbs. And that means that white ethnic groups, who have begun to emerge as a major suburban population force, will gain as a result.

The question then becomes how this new-found power will be used. Will suburban groups support socially progressive ideas and programs? Or will they become defensive of their positions and socially pessimistic, transfixed by such real problems as rising taxes and a rising crime rate, but paralyzed in the areas of social ideals?

Suburbia today is no longer synonomous with an affluent, upwardly mobile, homogeneous middle class. It also includes pockets of poverty, and a substantial proportion of lower middle class white ethnic America. In 1967, the AFL-CIO reminded us that 50 percent of all union members, and 75 percent of those under age 30, were living in the suburbs. Those figures are probably even higher today.

However, the suburbanization of the working class which began after World War II is still far from total. Large numbers of white ethnic communities remain in our major northeastern and midwestern industrial cities. Some of the neighborhoods are still in good physical condition; many have badly deteriorated. The aged, in particular, have stayed in their old neighborhoods. They present a special problem related to ethnic group identity and to the recent atomization of the ethnic family. Grandma and Grandpa are left behind and alone, their children are left without an older generation to relate to, and grandchildren are cut off from the kind of close relationship which confirms ethnic group identity.

As the dimensions of ethnic group relations and group power continue to grow beyond the bounds of our cities, we have reached a stage of urban-suburban trade-offs. A crucial question now emerges: How can the cities, with their relatively powerless minority and ethnic groups, relate to suburbs in a manner in which power can be equitably shared? To put it another way, how can we insure compassion for those who really need aid, without demanding unrealistic sacrifices from those whose suburban existence is far from problem-free?

THE SOCIAL POLICY DEBATE

Along with the questions of group interests and power, the old ideological debate on social policy has surfaced with renewed vigor. There are clear signals from the Nixon administration that we are fast moving away from a welfare state ideology and toward a "romantic" return to Coolidge or Harding "normalcy" (acceptable pump priming seems designed largely to aid the corporate world and the military).

The return to a laissez-faire economic approach toward the poor, however, will mean just that. There are no signs that special aid will be withdrawn from favored sectors of the economy or politically compliant regions. What is even more discouraging

than backsliding on social commitments by reactionaries, which came as no surprise, is the intellectual cover, intended or not, by the new advocates of "the limits of social policy," by sophisticated thinkers who have in the past generally been friendly to ethnic and minority causes.

Those arguments, principally set forth in such periodicals as Commentary and Public Interest, would seem, based on the evident failure of government to deliver needed services effectively, to be rational enough. In addition to programmatic failures, these critics correctly point to the negative social and political reactions set off in some groups when attention is focused exclusively on the needs of others. They conclude that since we don't know all the answers, it's better to do away with most of the new programs which grew out of the Kennedy-Johnson years and let people return to traditional forms of coping with problems "on their own."

I have little argument with those critics who believe that we have much to learn in better utilizing the forces of "organic communalism" in designing social programs. I have often spoken out for a greater understanding of the economics of "neighboring," and the efficacy of the informal people-oriented mutual aid networks which function in ethnic neighborhoods.

Yet I differ. What we need is not self-imposed limits in social policy and programming but the "fine-tuning" of social policy. We need programs that are designed to meet the needs of different groups of people in different social and economic circumstances and different living environments. We need more, not less, choice. We need the kind of governmentally-supported policies which offer a series of options for people, based on a diversity of lifestyles and preferred forms of aid. This will not happen by cutting off the resources with which those choices can be made to work.

In an age where the forces of technology and industry have operated too often to protect and expand their own economic self-interests, viable communities have gradually been destroyed, and individuals have increasingly been robbed of the capacity to function communally. What the "limits-of-social-policy" advocates do not appreciate is that it will take untold financial resources to rescue what is still alive of the "old communalism," to stimulate new forms of neighborhood development, and to create an environment where people can realistically return to the "naturalness" of self-help.

Irving Howe, editor of Dissent, has described the present climate as one of "social meanness." While it might be a bit unfair to label all those who preach the "limits of social policy" as being "socially mean," they should at least stand accused of lacking "social imagination."

It is unfortunate that our failure to solve our urban and inter-ethnic group problems has produced a climate where conservative and pessimistic views seem to prevail. It is a climate which can become paralyzing.

What we need instead of more conservative approaches to problems, are "conservationist" approaches -- solutions which seek to carefully preserve and build on those beneficial aspects of "rootedness," of neighborhood "people systems" and communal network which are still alive.

GROUP IDENTITY AND NEW COALITIONS

Excessive governmental centralization and standardization which began with the New Deal are not good enough for today. Workable social policy will have to be fashioned to respond to group differences, while clearly insuring equal justice and equal opportunity to all, with special help to those that need it.

Multi-ethnic coalitions, diverse by their very nature, yet cemented by concrete common concerns, can be extremely effective mechanisms for social and economic progress. That cannot be said, however, without some words of caution.

There are inherent dangers in the recent surge in ethnic identity which I am sure we're all aware of. In fostering alliances based on ethnicity, we take the risk of promoting exaggerated ethnocentrism and chauvinism which may backfire and lead to increased intergroup hostility.

But as we come to grips with the reality of the "new ethnicity" and the "new pluralism," we have little choice but to work to make it a positive and creative force, as utopian as that may sound. In doing so, we will be pushing against the forces of history.

But even in the disillusionment of the age of Watergate, there are encouraging signs that people of all economic, educational, religious, and political backgrounds -- as consumers, as "Common Causers," as feminists, as workers, as environmentalists, and as "ethnics" -- still want to come together. The ethnic identity "movement," particularly that of white ethnics, may prove to be only a flash in the pan. But it has already confounded the experts. A yearning for greater understanding of the American immigrant and ethnic experience may signify a decline in what Michael Novak calls the plastic "superculture."

There is some current controversy over the organizing methods of emerging ethnic groups. It is hard to say flatly that there is a right or wrong way to organize. I have a personal bias towards organizing around intergroup agendas, in addition

to rallying around ethnic, neighborhood, class or other agendas. While organizing is sometimes ideologically determined, it is also sometimes determined by the number of potential supporters who might rally under a particular banner.

People will continue to organize along class lines, a form that many "progressives" believe predisposes toward social activism, but they will also continue to organize along ethnic and religious lines as well. And contrary to the notions of some, there are as many examples throughout history of ethnic and religious institutions serving as vigorous advocates of social progress, as there are examples of their resistance to change.

However people choose to organize, those groups who are the most determined to bring about change will eventually organize along coalitional lines. When the need to make common cause is demanded, in a society as diverse as ours, the need for particular labels will be softened.

I see the role of organizers and of leaders in ethnic communities as one of sanctioning bridge-building forms of organization, and avoiding like the plague the kind of demagogic appeals that lead to fragmentation, separatism, ethnocentrism and a host of other "isms" which polarize.

Surprisingly, it may turn out that the proliferation of "groupness" in our society is less severe a problem than some people would have us believe. It is when ethnic groups are played off against one another that destructive conflict invariably results, not when they come together as a group to legitimately proclaim their needs to themselves and to the larger community.

There may be ways, however, to minimize these dangers. If it were up to me, I would devote unlimited resources to discovering the means to rationalize our best instincts. I would try to make a "science" of coalition-building and promote it as a professional discipline to be mastered by those who would deal with community problems. It is amazing how few people are trained to really understand the dynamics of coalitions.

In my fondest fantasy, I see the day when community and ethnic activists will wear buttons on both sides of their lapels. On one side they will say, "Black Power," "Polish Power," "Jewish Power," "Italian Power," "Women Power," "Senior Power." On the other, "I am a coalitionist."

Signs that a new coalition-oriented spirit is growing have already begun to appear even in New York where ethnic group polarization has at times been brutal in the last few years. Various ethnic groups here and elsewhere perceive that they will all be badly hurt by the Nixon budget. A new language across ethnic lines is beginning to develop. It says, "Yes, I'm going to have to talk to you now, even if I haven't in the past. We're both hurting pretty badly."

Coalition-building across ethnic lines should be the job of mainstream institutions in America. To do it well, they will have to overcome decades of failure to relate to particularism and group identity needs. To be effective, it is more crucial than ever for all of us to learn to "listen with a third ear" to what people are saying about their own needs in their own language.

Coalitionists will have to be more attuned to the tremendous diversity of value systems, diverse behavior and organizational patterns. They will have to learn more about pluralism in America, as it is reflected in the panoply of racial backgrounds, ethnic heritage, regional thinking, changing sex roles, religious philosophies, urban, suburban, and rural environments, youth and the aged.

If we can develop this new science and train the new practitioners, perhaps we will really have cause to celebrate in 1976.

This paper was initially presented to the Annual Seminar of the Committee on Integration of the American Immigration and Citizenship Conference, Columbia University, February 1973.

The Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity believes that if America is to survive as a healthy pluralistic nation we must respond to the needs of individuals who identify as members of groups and give attention to the broad spectrum of group agendas. At the same time, every precaution must be taken to assure that competing group demands do not deteriorate into polarization, negativism or destructive group chauvinism.

An outgrowth of the National Project on Ethnic America, the Institute's aim is to bring the social sciences and the humanities into closer contact with the values and life styles of America's diverse groupings. We concentrate on developing effective links between scholars, practitioners, government officials and constituencies; formulating new policies and programs related to group status, group identity and group diversity; and publishing and disseminating materials designed to foster better understanding.

It is our belief that the goals of promoting the common good and developing cooperation and coalition are best achieved by recognizing diversity rather than ignoring it.